

# THE NEW YORK MIRROR

A REFLEX OF THE DRAMATIC EVENTS OF THE WEEK.

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## NYM CRINKLE'S FEUILLETON

Points worth Considering in The Fall of Rome—The American's Profound Admiration for Largeness—Kiralffy's Shrewd Perception of this and the Attractiveness of the Multiple Drama—The Atrocious Spectacles of Rome's Palmy Days Stripped of their Cruelty and Garnished with Ballet—Politics and Theatricals.

It is not expedient to submit such a show as that of Kiralfy's on Staten Island to analysis. I mean that it is not expedient for the show. Still there are some points about it that are worth considering.

The points are largeness, numbers, motion, color.

Firstly my dear brethren, Largeness.

I said last week this was a pagan show. I did not mean that it dealt with a pagan subject. I meant that it appealed to a pagan instinct. I am not sure now that the instinct is so much pagan as American.

There is nobody on earth has such a profound admiration for mere largeness as an American. I never could quite make out whether it is owing to his large country or his large destiny.

When you think how much he owes to the largeness of his country it is not strange that he should measure the worth of things by their size. I have seen him in front of the Capitol at Washington awestruck at the thousand feet of facade and quite oblivious of the proportion. When he went home he studied up on all the great buildings of the world and chuckled at the superficial area of his national building. I have listened to Professor Cromwell, who delights small boys with his erudition, get round after round of applause when he declared with a glow of American pride that Pike's Peak was considerably higher than Mount Blanc. An American can always figure the Mississippi out bigger than the Nile by adding in the Missouri. And it is the hardest thing in the world to get a clean-cut Yankee to admire the little British Isle that rules more people than any other nation. He always adds, "Yes, but you could put her inside of Lake Superior."

He likes big things, and when he cannot get them big in girth he wants them big in numbers.

Did you ever notice how popular De Wolf Hopper is?

Well, Kiralfy has a shrewd perception of this. Hence the dimensions of his show at Staten Island.

It covers more acres than any show ever given here.

It employs more people.

Now consider a moment. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. "Bosh," says Kiralfy. Here are three ordinary dancing girls, slightly scrawny and freckled. I put them in front of you to do their conventional pacing. Do you see any genius in it? Not a bit. Let us make the number six, and add three more colors to their gowns. Don't you perceive the genius of it dawning? "Not by a long shot!" do you say. Well, hold your impatient horses while I add a hundred girls. It begins to have human interest, doesn't it?

"Stop there till I make it a thousand. Now it begins to have a moving magnificence. Don't you see? Here's a wreath of white paper artemisias. There's nothing to it, more it any way you like, and it is an uninteresting bunch of paper. But keep on duplicating it till you get a thousand wreaths. Then when five hundred of them go up be sure that five hundred will go down. And, hurrah! every shallow immortal soul that scrubs and peddles and tinkers will see in it a deep inscrutable majesty."

All this reminds me of Coleridge's famous argument: Two blind men cannot lead a third blind man, but if you get blind men enough infinite blindness will take the place of sight.

Why one hundred girls should be more interesting than ten girls, when the hundred do not add one element that the ten did not have is one of the mysteries of life.

You will find the answer in the fact that a regiment is more interesting than a squad. It presupposes more organizing skill, more discipline, more magnitude, more momentum, more force, more uniforms, more moreness.

It is the multiple drama.

Spectacle is all built on it. The soul thrills with a deep awe to see fifty girls doing rhythmically what one can do better. The divine sense in us that doesn't care a button

for one split skirt flapping about will tremble with inexplicable tremors if you make it sixty four split skirts and preserve the rhythm.

Just so one wave of the ocean would be dreary. But multitudinous waves set all the maidens at Long Branch wondering what they are saying. They cannot get rid of the notion that a million waves must say something that any one of them couldn't say.

Philosophically, this is absurd. Dramatically, or pictorially, it is inspiration.

All spectacular shows have one element in common: They are processional. In this respect they are like St. Patrick's Day in the morning.

I suppose New York that went down to see Nero; or, the Fall of Rome, fondly imagined that Kiralfy beat the Cæsars at this business.

"Poor innocents of the Nineteenth Century," it must say, "how poverty-struck are your nerves of sensation!"

Why, those spectacles of the palmy days of Rome were so specifically atrocious, they were so hideously adapted to the refined sensualism of æsthetic cruelty, that the Nineteenth Century cannot even in imagination restore them. Why, the gay women who promenaded on the Via Sacra in those days, and stopped to read the show bills pinned on the porticoes, turned up their dainty noses if the entertainment did not promise them the smell of burning human flesh.

They estimated life by the number of its few wildest pulsations!

"Stop a moment here, my unthinking reader, and reflect that there is in you, deep down,

But when a man was tortured in the streets of Rome in Nero's time the crowd rushed famishingly to witness every throb. It begrudged him the peace of death, because it robbed them of a thrill.

If we are to restore the great spectacles of Rome, how are we to restore the conditions? The benignant Mr. Kiralfy isn't developed up to the Cæsarean height.

Neither are his audiences.

So the show is indulgently like a water color sketch of the eruption of Vesuvius.

A thousand superficial feet of ballet girl gives us magnitude and multitude.

Two thousand pink legs, moving simultaneously under the bland stars on this "mad, naked Summer night," inspires one with a sense of geometry; of anatomy stretching out

The whole universe resolves itself into ballet girl.

Looked at critically it is a stupendous and animated panorama.

Permit me to say that while it was an immense picture—probably the biggest ever thrown up in our vicinity—it at the same time lacked dramatic incident. You cannot make a procession dramatic unless it is going to an Irish funeral or to charge a battery. There is no suspense in mere motion. If there was a fly wheel would beat a flying battery. A thing can be pictorial without being thrilling. Witness the Brooklyn Bridge or Mrs. Langtry. There is more action in the insects around an electric light than there is in the Mather trial. But Mr. J. M. Hill on the stand is more dramatic than a caravan on the move.

*Ex nihilo nihil fit* doesn't always fit.

Eleven hundred empty-headed strikers get momentum when they come together, if they don't get anything else. I've seen a full house inspire an actor when a full purse and a full stomach wouldn't do it.

I hope to Heaven you will not think I'm disparaging Kiralfy's stupendousness. There is a good deal to be said of his show. It is outdoors. That's one thing. It's on the sea-shore. That's another. You have to sail to it down the glorious old bay and smell the salt air, and when you get tired of ballet girl, you can roll your eyes up and there are the "hollow gulfs of stars" and the deep night empyrean, with the twinkling city in the distance and its necklace of Brooklyn Bridge lights, and Liberty Enlightening the World with a spark.

That will do you good.

Since I last wrote to you politics have set in to blow. To the amusement making world politics is chiefly interesting from the point of view of interference. The year of a great political campaign is always one of anxiety and hedging to the manager.

I am glad, therefore, to be able to offer some joy and comfort to the guild. I have interviewed several sagacious Republicans since the nomination was made, and they all assure me that there will be no excitement at all, the people will simply and quietly refuse to vote for Grover Cleveland, now that Harrison is offered them.

In this opinion Democrats agree, with the single exception of changing the name of the nominee. So one or the other of these men will be unanimously elected. The country will not worry about the matter, but only ignore one or the other.

My own private experience is somewhat different. I have known and respected Ben Harrison as an estimable Josh Whitcomb for years. Now, I hear that he is a perfidious and criminal wretch. My best friend who has seen me use a bandanna handkerchief for years, in fact ever since I took to snuff, now scowls and tells me to put up that infamous rag, and to long live the star-spangled banner!

I am really curious in this fight to see how the dramatic profession will range. The question of free trade or protection touches them somewhat, and it might be a good idea for Steele Mackaye or Dion Boucicault to lecture to the actors on this subject. Or perhaps T. Henry French can be induced to write a series of articles for THE MIRROR on Protection.

NYM CRINKLE.



DION BOUCICAULT.

That's like Prof. Cromwell again, who says that the Croton aqueduct would make two pyramids of Cheops. But it never occurs to him that the State House at Albany and the National Capitol thrown in would not make one little Parthenon.

Kiralfy cannot beat the Roman Emperors at this game, simply for the same reason that Illinois cannot produce a Timon, and the United States government cannot build a Chinese wall.

If Kiralfy could introduce the element of cruelty into his show—

Ah, then we might hope!

How the full, pure moon that looks down with its fat, shining face on this gorgeous spectacle of girls, must laugh to compare it with what it saw in Nero's time!

some strange inheritance of the demon that makes suffering fascinating. You sicken and tremble but gaze enthralled at agony. Now, go back and try and imagine a condition of society in which that demoniac impulse was a fashionable delight; when the jaded nerves of a debauched society could be thrilled by nothing but the spectacle of acute agony; when dainty women and lecherous men tolerated a tyrant because he ministered to their cruel lusts.

If a man falls in the streets of New York, crushed and writhing, all the ingenuity of civilization is noiselessly put in motion to relieve him. Ambulances rush to his aid, hospitals open their doors, policemen guard him, mercy throws a protecting blanket over his misery so that it cannot be seen.

like Coleridge's blind men, to infinity; of the descent of the Colorado locust; of a cosmic kaleidoscope.

Pretty soon the eye begins to ache. It is trying to do too much. A mile and a quarter of ballet girl strains the realizing sense. One ballet girl may be comforting. I believe there is a theory of that kind in the Union Club. But one thousand is exhaustive. The finite audience cannot grasp the infinite ballet-girl.

I say "grasp" in a metaphorical and visionary sense.

In half an hour the confused human intellect begins to totter on its throne, so to speak. It sees ballet girls stretching out in an immeasurable line across Staten Island, flickering down the Narrows and dancing like a disturbed mirage out to sea.

Attired in a light—very light—Summer suit, and scintillating with diamonds, Herrmann, the magician, hurried up Broadway the other day. When a reporter accosted him he stopped just long enough to pull down his scarf so that the full glare of the noonday sun might strike his begemmed collar-button, and said in his agreeable accents: "Yes, I have leased the Broad Street Theatre in Philadelphia, and I shall call it Herrmann's Broad Street Theatre. I shall make a first-class combination house of it. The prices will range from \$1 down, just the same as at the Grand Opera House here. I shall put in a fire proof curtain, and make improvements in the house during the Summer that will cost me fully \$25,000. I expect to open the theatre before the Summer is over, and am now negotiating for the opening attraction. James T. Dickson has been engaged as manager of the house."

The managers of two of the principal theatres of Chicago will not allow flowers to be passed over the footlights to performers. All floral gifts are sent around to the stage doors. The idea should be generally adopted.



The Most Successful and Triumphant Star Debut on Record  
WAS MADE AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE, WASHINGTON, D. C.,  
ON FRIDAY EVENING, JUNE 15, BY  
**LAVINIA SHANNON,**  
AS LADY AUDLEY, IN THE MYSTERY OF AUDLEY COURT.

Her performance of a difficult and trying role was successful beyond measure. Compared with Clara Morris, Fanny Davenport, and Mary Anderson. She possesses the genius of the former, and the classical beauty of the latter. Her audience spell-bound by the greatness of her impersonation. The ladies wave their handkerchiefs, and the gentlemen cry "Bravo!" Calls and recalls at the end of every act. The press unanimous in praise of her youth, beauty, refinement of manner and bearing, and her remarkable talents.

READ WHAT THE CRITICS SAY!

In spite of what was by long odds the hottest night of the season up to date, an audience of enormous dimensions, much social distinction, and unlimited demonstration, assembled at the National last Friday evening to greet Miss Lavinia Shannon, the brilliant young actress of this city, in her first appearance in the role of a star. The testimonial was given under the patronage of a number of people eminent in political and social life, very many of whom graced the occasion with their presence. In her selection of *The Mystery of Audley Court*, better known as *Lady Audley's Secret*, for the role of her future stellar career, Miss Shannon necessarily incurs comparison with some of the brightest lights of the dramatic firmament, but all who witnessed her off its on last Friday evening were fully convinced of her ability to hold her own with the best. The trouble with the average woman of the stage is that by the time she has acquired the experience and mastery of her art to adequately portray the greater heroines of the drama, she is well beyond the age when she can conceivably look the character. Miss Shannon's youth and beauty—for with a singularly bright and expressive face she combines the charms of a graceful figure and bearing, and excellent taste in dress—make her quite an ideal exponent of the dangerous and fascinating mistress of Audley Court. Her assumption of the role throughout is quite outside the lines of the academic and conventional, and for the mouthings and movements so common to this order of drama, she gives us a charmingly direct and easily natural manner, which at the climaxes leads to its effects with an electric force more readily felt than described. The mad scene at the close was as novel as it was admirable. There is a touch of the nervous and realistic pen of Miss Mademoiselle about Miss Shannon, albeit pitched in a higher key, and she should assuredly attain a marked success in her career, if she continues her art to go too far above the heads of the groundlings. Miss Shannon was repeatedly called before the curtain as an exponent of discriminating as it was genuine and hearty, and was fairly overwhelmed with floral tributes, the Brotherhood of Elks, as usual, being to the fore with a bouquet of colonial dimensions. The performance was in all respects a gratifying success, and the new star is entitled to nothing but congratulations on the brilliancy of her emergence upon the artistic horizon.—*The Sunday Herald, Washington, June 17, 1888.*

A performance of *The Mystery of Audley Court*, which in view of all the circumstances, must be regarded as decidedly successful, was given at the National Theatre last night as a testimonial to Miss Lavinia Shannon, a well-known young actress, who appeared in the title role, making her debut as a star. The audience was large, despite the stifling heat, and of course kindly disposed toward the performers, although the work of the latter was in the main of a character that required no apology. Miss Shannon was presented with many fine floral pieces, a large one coming from the Order of Elks. Miss Shannon, as Lady Audley, made a good impression and was recalled several times. Her work showed intelligence and dramatic tact and experience, and altogether her impersonation was pleasing to an unusual degree.—*The Evening Star, Washington, D. C., Saturday, June 16.*

THE SHANNON TESTIMONIAL.—The testimonial to Miss Lavinia Shannon last night brought together an audience that filled the New National Theatre in a manner that could not have been otherwise than satisfactory. It was the occasion of Miss Shannon's debut as a star, and the character she assumed was that of Lady Audley in *The Mystery of Audley Court*. Abundant opportunity was afforded for a display of talent, and the thoroughly capable young actress demonstrated her ability in an unmistakable manner. The part is a difficult one, and the emotional and passionate have equal opportunities. That Miss Shannon's ability was more than equal to the task was apparent to all, and the applause which greeted her efforts was honestly earned. Recalls came at the close of every act, and a number of floral offerings were presented to the young actress, that from the Order of Elks being in the form of a horseshoe and bearing the simple inscription, "Elks."—*The Post, Washington, Saturday, June 16, 1888.*

NEW NATIONAL THEATRE.—We had the pleasure of witnessing Miss Lavinia Shannon in the character of Lady Audley in *The Mystery of Audley Court*, on the occasion of the testimonial tendered her by her many friends in Washington, the New National Theatre, last Friday evening. A complimentary word said in her behalf would not add in any way to her perfect professional impersonation of the character or role. Miss Shannon is intelligent, beautiful, graceful, made

and a charmingly finished actor. She has our best wishes, and we are positive she will win the hearts of the audience wherever and whatever she may be billed to play.—*The Republic, Washington, D. C., Sunday morning, June 17, 1888.*

MISS SHANNON'S TRIUMPH.—The testimonial to that accomplished actress and charming lady, Miss Lavinia Shannon, at the New National Theatre last Friday evening was an artistic triumph of which the lady and her friends may justly be proud, while as a financial success it was beyond expectation. The audience was a very critical and fashionable one, and considering the sudden and intense heat a very flattering large one. The play was *The Mystery of Audley Court*, Miss Shannon appearing as Lady Audley. The demands of this character upon the artist are severe, but it is simple justice to say that Miss Shannon answered every requirement in the most highly artistic and satisfactory manner. Her work showed that she possesses a very unusually high degree of dramatic talent, which was especially noticeable in the intensest situations. Her manner is graceful and natural, her voice clear, sweet, penetrating and of delicious modulation, while her conception of the character revealed dramatic ability of the first order. When it is added that Miss Shannon is young and classically beautiful, the hardest critic is justified in pronouncing her a most brilliant actress. The rapid changes of emotion called for in the course of the play were given with effect, and in some of the scenes with power. The scene with Talboys in the fifth act, and her scenes with Talboys in the fourth and last acts evidenced her force, which at other times was held in admirable reserve. Miss Shannon's failure to give the letter a distinct pronunciation is a fault which no provincialism can excuse. It was the only marbling feature to an otherwise creditable performance. As it is, she is thoroughly justified in appearing as a star, and should be classed with Clara Morris, Fanny Davenport and Mary Anderson.—*The Capital, Washington, D. C., June 17, 1888.*

NATIONAL THEATRE.—It was to an appreciative audience Lavinia Shannon made her stellar debut at the National on Friday evening. The role of Lady Audley, which she has selected, is not a mere sensational part. The rapid changes of emotion called for in the course of the play were given with effect, and in some of the scenes with power. The scene with Talboys in the fifth act, and her scenes with Talboys in the fourth and last acts evidenced her force, which at other times was held in admirable reserve. Miss Shannon's failure to give the letter a distinct pronunciation is a fault which no provincialism can excuse. It was the only marbling feature to an otherwise creditable performance. As it is, she is thoroughly justified in appearing as a star, and should be classed with Clara Morris, Fanny Davenport and Mary Anderson.—*The Capital, Washington, D. C., June 17, 1888.*

LAVINIA SHANNON will star during the ensuing season as LADY AUDLEY, commencing her tour after the November election. Managers desiring the above attraction will please make application to the undersigned.

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ROCHESTER, N. Y., May 22, 1888.

GRAND OPERA HOUSE.

Character: In *Dore Davidson* is seen a man who is not only peculiarly fitted for the leading parts physically, but one who is also an actor in every sense of the word, possessing the custom, the naturalness and the adaptability for the many strong situations in which the scenes abound. As the mild, gentle and indeed lovable Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Davidson seemed to be all that was required. But when the startling change came at the close of the first act and the well-known spectators saw the deformed, cowering object with its hideous countenance, glaring eyes and protruding fangs few could resist a shudder of horror. The character of Hyde was so vividly portrayed that it seemed impossible to make it more realistic. Miss Ramie Austen made a sweet appearance, and won the hearts of her audience.

Character: *Dore Davidson*, who appeared in the dual role of Dr. Jekyll and Edward Hyde, proved himself an accomplished and gifted actor. His work was extremely difficult, but it was well done—indeed, it was done in a masterly manner and the audience did not hesitate to give expressions to an appreciation of this talented actor's refined and effective interpretation of the parts which he assumed. He was called before the curtain several times and was warmly applauded.

SYRACUSE, N. Y., May 25, 1888.

WITING'S OPERA HOUSE.

Journal: Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde was produced for the first time in Syracuse at the Witing, last evening, by *Dore Davidson* and *Miss Ramie Austen*. The celebrated play was received by the large audience with marked favor. The difficult dual role, which is so ably handled by Mr. Davidson, is strange and wonderful, and is one of the novelties of the stage of the present day. He is a painstaking and talented artist, and in his case the titular part receives a most interesting interpretation. The Witing of Miss Austen is an effective piece of dramatic work, making the whole performance one of thrilling and rare attractions.

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